Leadership

Biblical Principles to Help You Become a Successful Leader

BJ Rudge, Ph.D.

Hermitage, Pennsylvania

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 or 2020 by the Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are from the New King James Version of the Bible, copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are from the New International Version, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 1985 or 2011 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. References to the Deity have been capitalized.

Leadership: Biblical Principles to Help You Become a Successful Leader
Copyright © 2024 by BJ Rudge and Bill Rudge
ISBN 978-1-889809-29-8

Published by Living Truth Publishers
A Division of Bill Rudge Ministries, Inc.
Hermitage, Pennsylvania
www.billrudge.org

Typesetting by Pine Hill Graphics
Cover Design by Alpha Advertising

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author or publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Printed in the United States of America

Contents

Foreword

Best Resource on Leadership

Great Biblical Leaders

We All Leave a Legacy

Biblical Principles for Successful Leadership

Traits of an Ineffective Leader

Creating Effective Biblical Leaders

Golden Nuggets of Wisdom for Leaders

Leave Nothing in This Life

For More Information

Foreword

As a soccer coach, college professor, chaplain and pastor, I have witnessed both good and bad leadership. I have seen many people inspired by positive leaders while others were discouraged by negative leaders. Throughout this book, we will examine biblical principles for becoming an effective leader while exposing traits of ineffective leaders. Even if you are not currently in a leadership role, this study will prove beneficial for growth and spiritual maturity.

Best Resource on Leadership

Like Israel in the book of Judges, our nation and many other nations today are facing a dilemma of unethical, weak and ineffective leadership. Whether from business executives, politicians, celebrities, professional athletes, religious authorities, etc., corrupt leadership is one of the greatest crises facing our nation and world—with everyone doing whatever is right in their own eyes. Therefore, we desperately need strong and honorable leaders to guide this nation and world.

Considering the times in which we live, this book is designed to help provide practical biblical principles on how to be an effective leader. More specifically, regardless of who you are and what position you hold, these principles will equip you to be more successful in fulfilling God's call upon your life.

While there are many helpful resources on leadership detailing how to build successful businesses, create championship sports teams or obtain numerical growth for churches, they should not be our foundational source for becoming an effective leader for Jesus Christ. The Bible is our most valuable resource and must play the primary role in establishing our concept of leadership. In other words, what we need to know to be effective leaders for Jesus Christ is contained within the pages of God's written Word. As the Apostle Paul faced imminent death, he wrote the following to encourage young Timothy, who was to carry on what Paul had started:

> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible identifies that the greatest challenge we face is spiritual in nature. While all leaders will have to deal with difficult situations and difficult people, the ultimate battle is waged in the spiritual realm. The Apostle Paul, who personally knew the challenges of being a leader, wrote:

> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

The spiritual battle in which we are all engaged should be a reminder that we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be the person that God has called us to be. It is only with the Spirit's help that we can be effective leaders who leave a legacy that blesses our generation and those that follow.

Great Biblical Leaders

One day, a good friend stopped by my office. After ten years as a youth pastor, he was ready to leave the ministry. He said that, in spite of serving at three different churches, he'd never had a spiritual mentor. He was frustrated that he had not found an older man in his life to disciple him just as Paul did with Timothy (2 Timothy 1:13; 3:10, 14).

My friend's experience is not isolated. I have met many people who said they have no example of a true man or woman of God in their lives. Instead of encountering men and women totally sold out to God, they end up being exposed to "Christian" leaders who often reflect more of the world than Jesus Christ. Today, we need godly men and women to inspire, lead and disciple younger believers, then motivate them to train others (who in turn will train others). As Paul wrote to Timothy:

> You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Moses and Joshua

Israel provides a historical example of the impact that both positive and negative leadership can have upon a nation. Under the effective leadership of Moses and his successor Joshua, two leaders who looked to God for guidance and direction and consistently taught the people His commands, Israel experienced God's blessings. Both were humble servants, trusting God in the face of overwhelming circumstances. Each had tremendous zeal for the Lord and obedience to God's commands, other than one crucial infraction by Moses that cost him a trip to the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1-13). (Moses did, however, eventually enter the Holy Land as it was him and Elijah who appeared at Christ's transfiguration—Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36.)

The book of Judges tells us that the commendatory leadership of Joshua, who was trained by Moses, carried on to the next generation:

> The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel (Judges 2:7).

Sadly, the effective leadership of Moses and Joshua was undone in just one generation. As we find three verses later in Judges chapter two:

> All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel (Judges 2:10).

Because the new leaders failed to teach the Israelites the ways of God, the people soon began to worship false gods and no longer followed the commands of the Lord. As a result of poor leadership, Israel ultimately succumbed to unrestrained immorality and complete anarchy. The final verse of the book of Judges states the dismal outcome:

> In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25).

The Expositor's Bible Commentary reveals the tragic conclusion of this failed leadership:

> From the standpoint of the monarchy, the period of the judges was indeed a time of anarchy and upheaval. The often leaderless people wallowed in idolatry, immorality, and hatred. Sin abounded on both a personal and a national level, and God repeatedly allowed the enemy to overwhelm his people.

We All Leave a Legacy

What legacy we leave will depend upon the impact we had on those within our circle of influence. In other words, have we provided our family, friends, coworkers, etc., with an authentic example of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ? Would we want others to follow our pattern of living? Paul reminds us that we are all in a race. Like Paul, let our legacy be that we did more than run in the race—we ran to win (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Every Follower of Jesus Has an Eternal Calling

We are not in this world to merely pursue temporal rewards. Rather, as Paul says, we run this race for Christ to receive an imperishable crown (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). Knowing that we have an eternal purpose and destiny, we cannot just sit on the sidelines and be spectators. We need to step out of our comfort zone and make an eternal impact on our world for Jesus Christ.

As believers in Jesus, we need to be growing in our relationship with Him and the knowledge of His Word. We need to actively share our faith and be involved in activities that will help others and bear eternal fruit for God's Kingdom. Remember, we are Christ's ambassadors, and it is our job to be His representatives here on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Whom Do We Trust as Spiritual Leaders?

Many people tell me they attend a certain church because their pastor is a great communicator and storyteller. While an effective pastor employs communication skills, more is required in determining what leader we should follow. Rather than pastors who merely entertain or *tickle ears*, we need shepherds whose ultimate aim is to lead us toward holy and righteous living. We all need discernment in knowing whom we should trust as our spiritual leaders:

> I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

Biblical Principles for Successful Leadership

Show Humility

Humility may be the key characteristic God looks for in choosing a leader.

> These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word (Isaiah 66:2 NIV).

When I choose captains for my soccer team, I emphasize that an attitude of humility is essential if they want to be effective leaders. They must put the needs of their teammates ahead of their own. Their influence on the team is most evident when they embrace "servant leadership."

This is the exact view of leadership we find in the Bible. Contrary to being arrogant and boastful, God calls us to an attitude of humility. Jesus, Himself, provides the greatest example. Although God incarnate, Jesus willingly *humbled* Himself to provide salvation. As the Apostle Paul admonishes:

> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus' humility is clearly demonstrated as He washes His disciples' feet (John 13:12-17). Although the washing of feet was typically carried out by the lowest of slaves, Jesus performed this action to show His disciples that true leadership, love and strength are demonstrated when we serve others—not the other way around. Great leaders lead through humble service:

> Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, "You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

Through my own life, and watching the lives of others, I have found that those who are greatly used by God have gone through a point of brokenness in

their lives. A moment when God molds and shapes them into who He wants them to be. While this experience can be painful and difficult, those who embrace God's refining fire truly recognize what it means to be a man or woman after God's own heart.

David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). In fact, it was his heart (essence of who he was) that set him apart by God to replace King Saul. When God sent Samuel to anoint the next king, he thought God would have him anoint Jesse's son Eliab. From an outward appearance, Eliab had all the physical attributes to be the next king. However, God had not chosen him, as he reminds Samuel:

> Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

If you want to be a great leader, then you need to have a heart like David. A heart that acknowledges that one's life is totally dependent upon God. A heart that is willing to yield to God in all areas of life. A heart that seeks to bring God glory. A heart that approaches life with a teachable spirit, recognizing that there is always room to grow spiritually.

Communicate Effectively

Nehemiah was given the task of returning to Jerusalem—which had been destroyed by the Babylonians—and rebuilding the walls of the city. After inspecting the walls, he clearly communicated to the Israelites the plans God had laid on his heart for Jerusalem:

> Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work (Nehemiah 2:17-18).

As with Nehemiah, effective communication begins in laying out the vision. *Vision* states the purpose of *why* we are doing *what* we are doing. As a coach, I understand how vital this is to build a soccer program. I know what I want to accomplish (win our region and district), but I need to go deeper and identify the *why*. Doing this allows my coaches, players and myself to identify who we are as a team and why we exist as a program. The purpose statement for our program:

> …is to inspire our athletes towards excellence by fostering an

environment that seeks to instill conviction, passion, confidence, self-control and authentic relationships among the players.

Along with *defined vision, effective communication* requires a leader to set expectations, address conflicts, listen, empathize with others and be honest; saying what others may not want, but need, to hear, and a recognition that when addressing conflicts, it is not always about being right. As the legendary basketball coach John Wooden correctly notes, "The best leaders are more interested in finding what's right rather than in always being right."

An important key to effective communication is that it is always motivated out of love. In the words of the Apostle Paul:

> If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

A prominent church in our area suffered through the experience of poor communication. When the congregation was provided no information as to why a pastor was fired, the firestorm of rumors ensued, eventually leading to a split. The unfortunate result could have been avoided, or at least minimized, had the leadership provided proper communication.

(On a side note, great leaders respect confidentiality and do not engage in gossip and slander. As it says in Proverbs 20:19: A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.)

Possess Conviction

Daniel embodied this quality. Daniel was one of the Jews taken into exile following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Over the passage of time he was elevated in status from captive to ruler of the entire province of Babylon and chief over all the wise men (Daniel 2:48). Later, when the Medes and Persians destroyed Babylon, Daniel was again promoted to a position of prominence (Daniel 6:1-3). God was able to use Daniel in positions of great influence in his pagan world because Daniel was a man of conviction. He lived such a life of integrity that when the other advisors became jealous, they could not find any charge to bring against him, except in relation to the God he served:

> Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he

was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him. Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God" (Daniel 6:4-5).

Like Daniel, people of conviction possess *unwavering commitment*. They know *what* they believe and *why* they believe it. They live by what they say and hold themselves accountable when they fail. They display courage as they choose to stand for what they know to be right, even if that means standing alone.

In addition to being unwavering in commitment, being authentic and displaying courage, leaders of conviction create safeguards in their lives. The importance of this came to mind when I read the inspiring story of Charlotte Brown. In the spring of 2015, she won the bronze medal for pole vault in the state of Texas. While winning a state medal is a great accomplishment, this is not what caught my attention. The high school senior ran down the more than 130-foot runway, carrying a pole about 10 feet in length and vaulted over 11 feet in the air—all while being blind.

Charlotte had to count her steps and use a beeper to tell her when to plant the pole. Without these safeguards in place, she would not have known where she was on the runway, which would have prevented her from successfully making the vault. If we want to be *leaders of conviction*, we need to create safeguards that provide guidance and direction. The Word of God, prayer and input from other believers (mentors) are some of the safeguards that can keep us on the right path.

Leaders of conviction are the exception in a day defined by compromise. But when we choose to live faithful and upright lives before God, we will find ourselves, like Daniel, being used by God in powerful ways.

Seek Wise Counsel

There is a proverb in the Bible that says:

Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed (Proverbs 15:22).

I have applied this proverb to my coaching program. When I first took over, I realized that to make the program successful, I needed to surround myself with people who had the same goals, vision and principles I did. I am grateful for assistant coaches and others who helped provide support, counsel, insight and guidance.

Good leaders recognize the importance of having others in their lives to provide them with encouragement and edification. They understand that as: "Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). Each of us should have at least one person in our lives who cares enough to encourage us

when we are feeling discouraged, gently rebuke us when we need correction and provide godly wisdom as we make decisions.

If we want to be good and effective leaders, we should seek out people whose lives have been defined by a consistent walk with God; people, like the Apostle Paul, who are examples of what it means to walk in the Lord's will (Philippians 3:17). Let us ask that God will not only raise up a "Paul" in our lives, but also that we can be a "Paul" in the life of someone else! As the Apostle Paul declared to the believers at Philippi:

> The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:9).

Build Confidence and Courage

One of the great challenges facing leaders is encouraging others to step out of their comfort zone and overcome their fears. Joshua and Caleb faced this situation when Moses sent them and ten others to spy out the Promised Land. Only Joshua and Caleb trusted God's promise and believed He would enable them to conquer a land filled with giants and fortified cities (Numbers 14:6-9).

Following the death of Moses, Joshua was called by God for a monumental task—to lead the children of Israel into the land He had promised. In his new role as leader, Joshua empowered the Israelites with confidence and courage. How did he do this? Joshua already knew his strength came from God. He trusted the One who spoke to him the following words:

> Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them (Joshua 1:2, 5-6).

Joshua did not let anyone or anything distract or deter him from obeying God. He decisively commanded the officers of the Israelites to prepare to take possession of the land:

> Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it'" (Joshua 1:10-11).

Joshua's confidence, courage and zeal for the LORD inspired the Israelites:

> They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go" (Joshua 1:16).

Trusting God and stepping out in faith not only enables us to be men and women of confidence and courage, but to ignite these attributes in others.

As a coach, I remind my players of their past successes, give examples of others who have been successful, provide encouragement (but not flattery) and recite their value and importance both as individuals and team members.

Count the Cost

Leadership requires the sacrifice of time, family and convenience. There are no set hours being a leader. Often, you will need to make personal sacrifices and so will your loved ones. At the same time, it is crucial to create balance in your life to avoid burnout. Here are some helpful tips to keep a proper balance as a leader.

First, do not forget your priorities. This starts with your personal time with the Lord. I once heard a speaker say that God uses leaders who have uncommon communion with Him. So, like Jesus when He was here on earth, we need to make time with God of utmost importance. Our family should also be a top priority. We should view our spouse and children as the primary people under our circle of influence.

Second, we need to know who and what to invest in. People will drain us if we allow them. Therefore, we must invest in those who truly have a teachable spirit. Along with this, we need to set boundaries and clearly identify our area(s) of ministry. We need to operate from our area(s) of strength (gifts and talents). Efficient leaders, who avoid burnout, recognize that excellence in a few things is better than being average in a lot of things.

Third, proper balance as a leader means you make others independent of you and dependent upon the Lord. Beneficial leaders identify those in their circle of influence, equip them for service and then send them out, so they, too, can prepare and train others.

Leadership brings greater expectations and accountability. You are held to a higher standard because of a greater influential position. You become a bigger target in the spiritual battle that rages around us (Ephesians 6:12). We have an adversary who, like a roaring lion, seeks to devour every follower of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5:8). Satan knows that by attacking and destroying those in leadership, he can wreak havoc. Therefore, we are vigilant every day, putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18) and steeping our minds in prayer to avoid the schemes of the enemy.

A good friend of our family, Douglas Mastriano, was a colonel in the U.S. Army. In 1991, his regiment, the Second Armored Calvary, was sent to Saudi

Arabia to take the lead in the ground war offensive against Saddam Hussein's most loyal and motivated unit, the Republican Guards. In conversation about the various battles he was involved in during Operation Desert Storm, Doug told me that the key to his regiment's success was preparation:

> The training put an incredibly difficult strain on the soldiers and their families, but it did sharpen us into a well-tuned machine. Almost every month there was some sort of live-fire exercises, maneuver training, border duty, headquarter exercises and all sorts of battle drills to prepare us for that day, which even included a deployment to Turkey. We had trained for years for this day—and we were ready for it.

Colonel Mastriano and his men were ready because of what they did to prepare. That not one man was killed in his squadron, Doug also correctly attributes to the power of prayer. If we want to be effective leaders, we must be like the soldiers of Doug's regiment: count the cost, prepare for the objective and saturate everything in prayer.

Provide Hope

Everyone deals with trials and adversity. Successful leaders help others find hope in this journey of life and look beyond the current circumstance to see the bigger picture.

One year, I was coaching a talented team that was struggling to play up to their potential. After losing a few games, they began to lose confidence, and the hope that they could turn their season around. So, at practice one day, I told them about my children taking a pottery class.

The first day they were each given a lump of useless clay. The teacher said this lump of clay would eventually be turned into a beautiful vase. That is exactly what happened as each of my children molded their lump of clay into vases which, despite a few imperfections, still sit on display in our house. I told my players that while we may not be where we want to be, we needed to keep moving forward because, just like a lump of clay, our team, too, can become a *beautiful vase*.

Leadership requires perseverance and forward movement to instill hope in others. I witnessed an amazing example of this during a high school soccer game against a regional opponent. It was an important game because both teams were undefeated and tied for first place. As the game began, it became obvious that our team was superior. We kept the ball on the other team's half of the field as we took shot after shot and, at the same time, prevented them from scoring. In the end, we won 9 to 0.

While my players provided many great moments in the game, the greatest impression was made by the opposing team's goalkeeper. As I watched her warm up, I was impressed with her work ethic. What especially caught my attention

was how she dealt with a prosthetic leg. (After the game we learned she had lost her leg about two years earlier in a boating accident.) While I respected this girl, I wondered how she would be able to play goalkeeper. In all my years playing and coaching soccer, I had never seen anyone play soccer with a prosthetic leg.

I quickly realized that what I perceived as a "limitation" for this girl was, in fact, a driving force to do something that I am sure many people told her she could never do. Here was a teenager who had every excuse to stay off the field but, instead, chose to persevere regardless of the loss of her leg. What impressed me even more than the fact she played was how she played. She did everything a goalkeeper should do: dive, catch, punt and communicate with her teammates.

As our team began to score, putting constant pressure on the opposing team's defense, it was clear we were going to win the game, but their goalie never stopped working hard. She kept encouraging her teammates and got back up every time she dove for a ball. At one point, she made an incredible diving save that caused her prosthetic leg to come loose. Without any drama, she hobbled over to the bench, adjusted the leg and came right back out like nothing had happened. Until the final whistle, she continued to give everything she could for her team. She was a true inspiration to everyone at the game, and a wonderful example of perseverance.

Just like this goalie, effective leadership doesn't make excuses. Leaders persevere through difficult times and provide encouragement and hope for those around them. The type of people God is looking for are those who, in the midst of life's challenges, place their faith and trust in Him. Paul writes in his letter to the church in Rome: "we also celebrate in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4).

Inspire Others

One of the most important lessons I have learned is the difference between motivation and inspiration. Motivation is an external influence while inspiration comes from within.

In my early coaching days, I was taught the best way to motivate athletes was by using fear or reward. I often said, "If you don't work hard today, you'll have to run sprints; if you do work hard, no sprints after practice." However, trying to motivate my players through the threat or reward method resulted in having to repeatedly do so, and I eventually realized I was not getting their best efforts.

By contrast, inspiring players develops within them an internal love and passion for, and joy in, the game. This, in turn, dramatically enhances their overall effort as well as their ability to inspire those around them. But how is this accomplished? The following are a few tactics I use to inspire my athletes:

I remind them of their roots. I began taking my seniors to our local YMCA because it is the place where our high school program held its first game. I tell them what sacrifices were made and how far our program has come, and I

remind them that they need to remember the tradition they are part of and to consider what legacy they want to leave.

I share personal memories and experiences. When I first started at age six, I played for love of the game. My focus was more on playing and scoring, rather than winning, because I enjoyed it. I *encouraged* my team to remember the excitement they had when they first played and to never lose the love and joy they had back then.

I build a sense of community. Each member is essential in working together for the common good. To illustrate this, we have chosen the redwood tree as a symbol worn on our practice shirts. Redwoods have shallow roots, despite their extreme height, and to withstand the wind, their roots interconnect with the roots of the surrounding redwood trees. Thus, when the wind blows, it is not just blowing against one tree but against a forest!

I invest in their lives. I demonstrate in words and actions that the purpose of our program goes beyond winning; it is to help build character into their lives.

The previous points are steps my coaching staff and I employ to inspire our athletes, which has enabled us to build a reputable and successful program. It has also allowed us to make a difference in their lives. A graduating player invited me to attend a banquet for being an influence in her life. She gave me a special frame with the following quote by Bob Nelson:

> You get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within.

By inspiring our players with a passion for soccer, we have seen them go out and share that passion with others. In a similar manner, when you inspire others spiritually to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, then they, too, will share with others their love and passion for God.

The Apostle Paul was a powerful leader who inspired others through his example. He told the Corinthian church to be imitators of him as he followed the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). His words to the church at Rome should resonate with all of us:

> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord (Romans 12:11 NIV).

What Then?

We desperately need courageous and righteous leaders today. Effective and godly leadership comes through having a humble spirit, communicating effectively, possessing conviction, seeking wise counsel, building confidence and courage in others, counting the cost, offering hope in difficult times and inspiring others. Those who lead in this manner will have a far-reaching effect for God and will be a blessing to others:

When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan (Proverbs 29:2 NKJV).

Traits of an Ineffective Leader

Making Excuses

I wanted to teach my high school soccer team the importance of keeping their focus and not becoming complacent, so I brought a jar of 18 marbles to practice. Each marble represented how many games the team had to play in the regular season. I explained that each season they are given only a limited number of marbles (games), and they must decide what to do with each one. Once the marbles were gone, they could never get them back.

In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), Jesus teaches how we should live as we await His return. He reminds us that, like the master who provided each of his servants with talents, we are to be faithful with what we have been given. By contrast, verses 24-30 focus on the wicked and lazy servant who wasted opportunities and lived a fruitless life.

As in the team parallel given above, in life, we all are given only so many "marbles." Will we waste our opportunities, making excuses for inaction and failure? These are traits exhibited in bad leadership. Or, will we use our opportunities to live fruitful lives for Jesus Christ?

Impulsive Decisions

Consider Esau who, because he was hungry, sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew (Genesis 25:29-34). As the firstborn son, Esau's birthright entitled him to several blessings; however, Esau rashly gave all this up for a bowl of stew.

Impulsive decisions can have adverse effects, not only for the leader but also for those affected by his or her decisions. For personal study, ponder the disastrous consequences of King Saul's hasty decision to consult the witch at Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-19).

All about Me

Our culture may view bragging and self-praise as a sign of confidence and leadership ability, but the Bible makes it clear that God opposes the proud (1 Peter 5:5). Boasting in one's own strength and bragging about one's feats without acknowledging God is self-glorification—a sure road to eventual defeat and humiliation.

Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, surveyed his empire and made the following arrogant claim:

> Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? (Daniel 4:30).

Babylon was certainly a place of beauty and majesty under Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Not only did he construct the hanging gardens (recognized as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world), his capital city was surrounded by a double wall that was 10 miles in length highlighted by the elaborate Ishtar Gate. He expanded the empire (becoming the first Babylonian king to rule over Egypt) and brought Babylon to world dominance. However, in the midst of boasting about his great accomplishments, the following occurred:

> While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!" (Daniel 4:31 NKJV).

Nebuchadnezzar is a real example of the biblical truth that pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). The passage in Daniel goes on to tell us that Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from his people and lived like a wild animal until he realized that the Most High is ruler over the kingdoms of men (Daniel 4:32-33). Nebuchadnezzar was restored to power after he recognized that honor and glory belong to God alone (Daniel 4:34-37).

Saddam Hussein ruled over the nation of Iraq and desired to be the next Nebuchadnezzar. He wanted to rebuild Babylon and gain prominence over surrounding nations. This proud and boastful man lived in opulence while his subjects lived in poverty. Saddam was eventually humbled. He was captured by American forces—found hiding like an animal in a hole in the ground. Put on trial by the Iraqi Special Tribunal, he was executed for his crimes against humanity and the Iraqi people.

Self-exalting pride leads down a dangerous and destructive path; it hinders one from being an effective leader for God. True humility acknowledges that it is not "all about me" but testifies that everything one has and everything that one accomplishes comes from the Lord.

Controlled by Fear

In my coaching, I have seen many players fall short of their potential. The most common reason is fear: fear of failure, fear of incompetence and fear of disappointing others. As in sports, fear has a crippling effect in leadership. Moses had to face this reality when God told him to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Moses' response echoes his fear of inadequacy:

> Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither

before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue (Exodus 3:11; 4:10 NKJV).

With God's help, Moses was able to move beyond his fear and lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and through the wilderness to the edge of the land God promised them.

A sad reality is that people who are dominated by fear forfeit opportunities to be used by God. This loss is due not to their own shortcomings, but to their lack of trust in God—not believing He can use them to make a difference in the lives of others. Never forget, the key to being used by God is not based on your *ability* but on your *availability*.

Give in to Compromise

King Saul is an example of compromise. In the early chapters of 1 Samuel, we find a man who had been accepted by God as the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:24). However, because Saul constantly compromised (1 Samuel 13:7-14; 15:1-9), God eventually rejected him (1 Samuel 15:14-23) and no longer answered him (1 Samuel 28:6).

King Ahab is another example of how compromise destroyed a leader. He not only allowed his wicked wife Jezebel to influence him, but he let her lead the people of Israel into idolatry through Baal worship. His life of compromise not only resulted in his death but that of his entire family (1 Kings 22:29-40; 2 Kings 10:17).

While leaders need to be adaptable and sometimes make concessions, never compromise your convictions or commitment to the Lord as Saul and Ahab did.

Dictate Terms to God

The account of the prophet Jonah is a reminder to not set limitations on God. Jonah wanted God to destroy the wicked city of Nineveh. Unwilling to obey God's command to call the city to repentance, Jonah initially ran away (Jonah 1:1-3).

In biblical leadership, God will not put up with those who approach Him with a sense of entitlement or predetermined expectations of what He must do for them. A friend of mine learned this lesson when he began the process of planting a church. He told me he would not accept anything less than planting a mega-church. He felt that a small church would not be worth his time and energy. After a year of little success, the church he planted failed, and he left the ministry. He later learned that while there is nothing wrong with wanting to be successful, this must never take precedence over being faithful. My friend was eventually restored to another pastoral position where he is faithfully serving the Lord.

As leaders (and believers), our ultimate goal should be to seek and yield to

God's will. Dictating what we want, imposing our expectations or attempting to manipulate God is futile. In the end, His plan will succeed:

> Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:21 NIV).

Complain in Difficulty

Under the leadership of Moses, God had taken the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. He supernaturally provided for their needs during their wilderness journey. As they approached the promised land, Moses selected twelve men—tribal leaders—to scout the land. They all came back and reported that the land was just as God promised—flowing with milk and honey (Numbers 13:27). However, ten of the spies pronounced they could not conquer the land because it was inhabited by powerful people who lived in fortified cities (Numbers 13:28).

This negative report caused such grumbling and rebellion among the Israelites that God made them wander forty years until all those age twenty and older died in the wilderness. Of the older generation, only Caleb and Joshua (the two spies who remained faithful to God) entered the promised land (Numbers 14:24, 30).

Reap Destructive Fruit

It is imperative that we do not become, or follow, leaders who habitually use excuses, make impulsive decisions, are "all about me," or are controlled by fear, give in to compromise, dictate to God what they want or grumble and rebel in the face of difficulties.

If we are to be the leaders God has called us to be, then we need to avoid that which is displeasing to the Lord. Instead, let's embrace the qualities and characteristics that honor the Lord and make *great* leaders for Him.

Creating Effective Biblical Leaders

The following is excerpted from a college paper I wrote on leadership regarding the principles by which my father, Bill Rudge, operates a multifaceted ministry he established in August 1977. It summarizes and delineates the concepts I have addressed in this booklet. May it serve as a continuing roadmap for your success in leadership.

Establish a Clear Vision—The first step of a good leader is to have clear goals and vision—with strategies to fulfill them. Bill's purpose is clear: Reach a searching world with the Gospel and challenge believers to reach their maximum potential in Christ through the various aspects of his multifaceted ministry.

Communicate to Avoid Conflict—Another aspect of leadership is being able to deal with conflicts. Not everything is going to go according to plan, and when difficulties arise, the person in charge must resolve them. Most problems occur because of a misunderstanding due to lack of communication. One of the best ways to deal with conflict is through communication with those involved before it gets out of control.

Manage Stress Effectively—Stressful circumstances are frequent in Bill's life and ministry, but he has effective ways of dealing with them. Foremost is his deep trust in the Lord, and his refreshing times of prayer and Scripture study. Exercising, eating nutritiously and having a good attitude are also crucial in conquering stress. Another key factor Bill utilizes to reduce stress is keeping himself and the ministry organized. He has a lot going on—often simultaneously—but everything is usually well organized. In all he does, he strives for excellence because he believes that quality is more important than quantity.

Develop a Great Team—Another major part of leadership is the development of staff. Bill Rudge Ministries has over 30 full-time, part-time, volunteer and freelance staff—many of whom have been with him more than twenty-five years. Throughout the years, he has trained hundreds of people—many of whom serve in leadership positions in various churches, ministries and organizations. Potential staff members are informed of the standards and guidelines of the ministry, what will be expected of them and given a list of possible job descriptions they can select. During the initial interview process, we look for certain characteristics. First and foremost is their commitment to Christ. Being organized, confidential, friendly, motivated, dedicated, determined, diligent, disciplined, trustworthy and having a teachable spirit are also essential qualities. Once someone joins the ministry team, the developing process begins by training them to use their gifts and talents to fulfill the goals and vision the Lord has given Bill and Karen.

Be a Servant-Leader—Anyone in a management position must learn to be a good leader. After four years of coaching youth soccer and winning four championships, the players and parents gave Bill a cup with the inscription:

“That man is a success who brings out the best in others and gives the best of himself.” This saying accurately describes qualities of a good leader. Leaders must lead not only by instruction, but also by example. Bill never asks his staff to do anything he would not do himself. He is a servant-leader in that he serves others while leading them. He tells new staff that, before they can become a true leader, they must first learn to be a servant. All those he supervises understand that they are not working *for* him, but *with* him, as together they serve the Lord.

Manage Time Wisely—Managing time wisely is another crucial element for leaders. Bill has numerous responsibilities and deadlines such as preparing messages, writing articles, books and newsletters, producing radio broadcasts, podcasts and videos, web site development, correspondence, crisis intervention, teaching defense classes, running groups through the ministry’s obstacle course, overseeing staff, administrative duties, legal and financial accountability, board meetings, advanced training courses and other commitments to fulfill. As well as working many early mornings, nights and weekends, Bill must schedule blocks of days—sometimes weeks—for speaking engagements, mission trips, finishing writing books or other special projects. Bill has a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly planner for scheduling his essentials and priorities. He also has checklists to keep him on track concerning current and long-term plans and projects. A disciplined and organized lifestyle has enabled Bill to maximize his time and efforts. While he is not one to waste time in frivolous pursuits and conversations, he always takes time for someone in need of encouragement.

Delegation—Bill quickly realized that by training others, ministry efforts could be multiplied and maximized. For him to accomplish all that needs to be done, he must maximize his time. This is done by delegating as much as possible to other staff. Their specialized talents — and often behind-the-scenes work—is a tremendous part of the success of this ministry.

Appreciate People—Being a leader not only requires making decisions and overseeing staff, but also the ability to interact with, relate to and appreciate them. Bill’s advice to pastors and Christian leaders is simple: “Appreciate your staff and volunteers.” He rarely lets anyone leave the ministry center without thanking them for their service that day. Those who work for the ministry at other locations throughout the country are frequently thanked during a phone call, email or special card or letter. Do not take for granted what the Lord has entrusted into your care. Always appreciate the Lord and the resources, facilities and staff He provides.

Live a Life of Integrity—Apparent in every aspect of Bill’s life and ministry is a desire to live a life of integrity. He operates his nonprofit organization accordingly and seeks to maintain high personal and financial accountability. Knowing he will one day give an account to his Lord, being a wise and faithful steward is of utmost importance to him.

Courage, compassion, determination and self-control are other biblical qualities needed by leaders, but of utmost importance is faithfulness to the Lord and His Word!

Golden Nuggets of Wisdom for Leaders

The following chapter was excerpted from an article written by Bill Rudge in his July 2023 newsletter. May these "golden nuggets" provide biblical truth and principles upon which you can reflect to refine, reinforce and reaffirm leadership qualities.

Time Passes Quickly

I had just turned 25 when I started this ministry in 1977. Older ministers told me that the years will pass quickly. They were right! The ministry will turn 46 at the beginning of next month. Less than two weeks after committing my life to Christ at the age of 18, I married Karen, who was 17. Then, at age 19, I attended Bible college, graduating four years later with a ministerial license. At age 25, with the help of Karen and Sheree Zippay, I started Bill Rudge Ministries. At age 30, I was ordained as a minister.

The insight gained throughout the years has been drawn from a multitude of experiences and, seemingly, multiple "lives" across several generations: from being a middle child with four brothers and one sister, to being married with two children and eleven grandchildren; from being bullied as a kid, to becoming a fitness and martial arts instructor; from being a rebellious teenager, to becoming a committed Christian; from being voted least likely to succeed, to developing a ministry challenging youth and adults to reach their maximum potential; from working as a youth pastor and training with Youth for Christ, to designing a multifaceted international ministry; from running from God while hitchhiking across the country, to proclaiming His Gospel worldwide through adventure-filled mission trips, speaking engagements, radio broadcasts, authoring books and so much more.

Lessons Learned

While traveling life's journey and traversing the world, I have acquired valuable life-lessons through experience, observation and reflection. For instance:

- We are not here by random chance—we are, rather, a unique creation designed for a special purpose.
- We may think we are the masters of our fates, but God is the determiner of our destinies.

- If we think too highly of ourselves, remembering that one accident, one disease or a few days without water, can show just how vulnerable we really are and how dependent we are upon God's provision.
- Sometimes, the Lord seems to "hide" His face, shrouded in silence. But, those who seek Him with all their hearts will find Him and discover His reality.
- The wisest and most courageous decision we can ever make is to commit our lives to Jesus Christ.
- In spite of dangers and even life-threatening circumstances over the years, the Lord has confirmed His promise that my life would not be taken until His purpose is fulfilled.
- His path is rarely easy—many times it takes us through "rugged terrain," "dark woods," "deep valleys," "barren deserts" and "isolated wildernesses"—but He is always faithful, and the obstacles really do make us stronger.
- In God's time and in His way, all things work together for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.
- More important than trying to change our circumstances is the change that occurs within us through our circumstances.
- We can't control everything that happens in our lives, but we can control how we respond.
- It is not our "giants" that defeat us, but our fear of them.
- Worries and fears that immobilize are destructive. But, care and concern that motivates one to pray, trust in the Lord and take positive action are beneficial.
- Spending time on our knees in prayer enables us to stand in any situation.
- The four most important things in life are faith, family, friends and fitness.
- Building one's life and ministry on Scripture and the leading of God's Spirit is the essence of wisdom.
- The word retirement is not in my vocabulary.
- Live in such a way that, when we depart this life, we leave a legacy of love, faith and integrity.
- What God's Word forbids is not intended to ruin our fun but to protect us from harm.

- If there was more than one way of salvation, God would never have let His only begotten Son die for our sins.
- We must never sell or merchandise the Gospel since it was freely given to us.
- Rise above the waves of gossip or be drowned by them.
- Look beyond what someone says or does and consider the motives behind what they said or did.
- Be slow to speak and quick to listen—keep your mouth shut when appropriate, and you will stay out of trouble.
- Do not envy what someone else has or accomplishes—materialism and success never truly satisfy but fade like spring flowers.
- An attitude of gratitude to God multiplies our joy; it changes our focus from fretting over what we do not have to appreciating all we do have.
- Many people fight and scrap to get what they want, but, when they get it, they realize it is not what they really wanted.
- The true measure of a person's character and strength is how they treat those who are weaker, poorer or less gifted.
- Sometimes, less is better. Less clutter results in less stress and more efficiency. Less waste supplies more resources. Less negative thinking brings a better attitude and nurtures emotional stability. Less criticism generates better friendships. Less worry and fear improves overall well-being. Less junk food produces better health. Less financial debt (and paying no interest) enhances financial security. Less bickering creates more peace in the home. Less contending with the Lord makes one more productive in ministry.
- Surrounding ourselves with those who are positive and faithful to the Lord inspires us to strive for excellence.
- Leaders cannot be experts in everything. They should surround themselves with trustworthy people who are skilled in areas of need and delegate responsibility to them.
- Never forget those who have helped you along life's journey. Always remember to thank them.
- The key to many of the successes experienced in our lives and ministries can be directly traced to prayer intercessors, supporters and workers behind the scenes.
- Do not attempt to manipulate God into what you want Him to be, or what you think He should be, but discover who He is and what He requires of you through His Word and Spirit.

- Instead of determining what we want to do and expecting God to fulfill it, desire and seek His will. In the end, our lives will far exceed what we could ever have thought or imagined.
- Many, in the face of death, are remorseful for wasted years, but none, at the end of their lives, regret serving Jesus Christ.
- Minimize the regrets of tomorrow with the wise choices of today.
- The past is over so let it go—but don't forget its lessons. The present is here so embrace it—use it for God's glory. The future is yet to come so prepare for it—it lasts forever.
- Live every day as if it were our last day on this planet—for one day it will be.
- Always be prepared to meet our Maker. Too many, who intended to get right with God later, died unexpectedly.
- The only door that will get you into God's Heavenly Kingdom is Jesus Christ. All other "doors" will lead you to a kingdom you will not want to enter once you arrive.
- The God of the Bible is Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe. To Him alone do we bow down, submit our wills, dedicate our hearts, offer our praise, devote our worship and entrust our destinies.
- The God who created us, called us and commissioned us—the One to whom we are committed and consecrated—will one day commend us for faithfulness to Him and His Word.

The Lord has taught me many other insights, truths and practical wisdom by His Word and Spirit during my lifetime quest to know Him more and walk in His ways. They are spread throughout the pages of the various books I have written and the messages I have given.

I am certain you, too, have several important life-lessons. Reflect upon them periodically to reinforce your faith and be strengthened in your commitment to Christ.

Leave Nothing in This Life

Some may think this title reflects a hedonistic lifestyle of consuming all the pleasure you can squeeze from this life and leave nothing behind that could be consumed for your own benefit. However, that could not be further from the truth.

I heard someone say that when you stand before God make sure you have nothing left to give. What he meant by this was that we should use all of our energy and resources in this life to honor and serve God, so when we stand before Him, we will not be ashamed of wasted opportunities.

This comment made me think of a man I met when I was in seminary. He was a prime example of servant leadership. His name was Ray, and he had served as a missionary for a number of years in China. When we met, he was in his nineties, and he no longer had the physical ability to serve on the mission field. In many people's minds, Ray had walked and served God faithfully. Now, he was entitled to retire from ministry and enjoy the comforts of life until the Lord called him home.

Even though Ray was up in age and wearing down physically, he still knew there was more he could do to further the kingdom of God—in fact, this is how we met. He lived in a dorm on campus and started a ministry of counseling students who were engaged to be married. When he found out I was engaged, he quickly connected with me, and our relationship grew from that point on.

Ray was such an encouragement, and a great source of information on what God expected of me as a husband. After I graduated from seminary, I heard that Ray was no longer able to take care of himself, so he had to be put into a nursing home. I was able to get in touch with Ray, and we wrote each other and spoke on the phone. I remember him telling me how difficult it was to go to the nursing home. He was not only losing his independence, but also the ability to continue his ministry on campus to engaged couples.

Despite the difficulty of his circumstances, Ray told me that God had a new ministry for him; God had now called him to reach out with the Gospel to the many people in the nursing home who were hurting and alone.

A few months later, I received a message that Ray had passed away. I was saddened to hear of his death, yet I knew that Ray's greatest desire was to stand before the Lord and hear Him say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

I will always remember Ray as a person who used every opportunity to serve and honor God. His life exemplified someone who, until the moment he left this earth, gave everything he had to God.

The Apostle Paul is another great example of someone who left nothing in this life. As he approached the imminence of death, he made the following comment to Timothy:

> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

While there is nothing wrong with enjoying life, relaxing and pursuing personal hobbies, we must not put our desires, goals and aspirations above serving God. In all activities, may our lives honor the Lord and reflect His goodness.

I do not know about you, but I want to live a life like Paul and my friend Ray. I do not want to waste the opportunities God gives me. I do not want to be ashamed when I stand before Him or regret not giving Him more of my time, energy and resources. I want to face death with the confidence of Paul by knowing I have fought the good fight.

May we all run this race to win the ultimate prize and seek every opportunity to give all we have to God (Philippians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

For More Information

BJ and Bill Rudge have produced numerous books, pamphlets and audio messages on a variety of timely topics. For a complete listing or a copy of the ministry's informative newsletter, visit www.billrudge.org or write to:

Bill Rudge Ministries
P.O. Box 108
Sharon, PA 16146
U.S.A.
www.billrudge.org